

Ergonomics demonstration project: Awareness Education Toolbox

Need

One of the first requirements of the ergonomics rule employers will need to comply with is to provide awareness education to employees in caution zone jobs and their supervisors. The rule lists the required elements for the education and allows employers considerable flexibility. However, it was recognized that many employers would benefit from model education programs – smaller employers because they could use these materials directly and know they are in compliance, and larger employers because they can model their company-specific educational materials on L&I-approved materials.

Goal

The goal of this project is to develop model education materials in a variety of formats. Employers can use the materials as is, or as a template for industry- or company-specific materials they develop.

Project design

The Toolbox Group began meeting after it was suggested by stakeholders that the Department of Labor and Industries work with interested parties to develop more educational materials on ergonomics. The Toolbox Group consists of representatives from industry and health care with expertise in ergonomics, as well as private ergonomics consultants. In addition, an L&I ergonomist facilitates the meetings.

At the first meeting, the group decided there was an immediate need for materials that would help employers comply with the educational requirements in the rule. The group began by cataloging available ergonomics educational materials, but quickly decided that off-the-shelf products lacked specificity. The group recommended developing awareness education materials in a variety of media. Computer slide shows were identified as one of the quickest types of materials to be developed, and videotape as one of the more prevalent ways for widely distributing a message.

The group first developed a script that would meet the requirements of the rule. Several different groups, both Toolbox members and outside organizations, participated in collecting video and photo examples of caution zone risk factors and controls to be used in both the slide show and video materials.

The slide show has been distributed through the web site and CD-ROM, and many users plan to customize them for their own needs. Paper-based and overhead versions are available to employers who do not have the necessary computer technology. Additional handouts and customization tips will be provided as instructor's kits.

The video is nearing completion, and will be closed-captioned. A Spanish-language version will also be produced. Copies of the video will be given to businesses and organizations and will be available for loan from the L&I video library.

The Toolbox Group would like to continue to meet to develop other training materials related to ergonomics.

Timetable

February 2000Group begins meeting
January 2001Script completed
March 2001Slide show completed and posted on web site
September 2001Video completion expected

Results

The project has generated the following products:

- A script and examples of risk factors and solutions that can be used to develop awareness education materials in a variety of media.
- A computer slide show, available on CD-ROM and the L&I web site, that can be used or customized to comply with the awareness education requirements of the ergonomics rule.
- A video and instructor's kit that can be used to comply with the awareness education requirements of the ergonomics rule.

L&I will consider these materials as a safe harbor; in other words, if the awareness education materials are delivered as outlined in the instructor's guide, the program will be considered to be in compliance.

The materials can also be used as examples to guide the development of company- or industry-specific materials. One member of the Toolbox Group took the script and had his company develop a combined video and slide presentation, which the company has already used to comply with the awareness education requirements.